

A HERITAGE RECALLED

Rutland's Pre-Civil War Immigrants

As a result of its development as a railroad and marble center in the nineteenth century at the same time the great European immigration to America was occurring, Rutland had a more varied ethnic heritage than many communities of similar size.

The history of Rutland's immigrants is yet to be comprehensively detailed, their origins, settlement, customs, contributions and assimilation yet to be fully explored.

In the past 30 years, however, some of the children and grandchildren of these immigrants have begun to write down the experiences of various nationalities or of individual families. Of particular importance are the Reverend Patrick T. Hannon's histories of three local Catholic churches, which collectively contain the most extensively researched and most complete accounts of some of Rutland's immigrants yet written.

The Rutland Historical Society is devoting its summer, 1982, Museum exhibit to the "Ethnic Heritage of the Rutland Area". The extant scattered, and largely unpublished, written accounts of these immigrants are simultaneously being set forth in the *Quarterly*, not only to foster an appreciation of this rich heritage but also to create a consolidated record of what currently exists for reference and research. It is hoped that such a compilation will encourage others to help complete the historical record of this important chapter in Rutland's history.

The accounts begin with an article which gives an overview of the waves of European immigration to Rutland, and continue with the stories of the various national groups in roughly the chronological order in which they arrived: the Irish, French Canadians, Swedes, Italians, Poles, Finns and smaller groups from Central Europe. Since these accounts have been composed at various times, the dates when they were written should be noted, as they can be best understood and evaluated in the context of the time they reflect.

The accounts will continue in future *Quarterlies*. Please furnish the Society with a copy of any such account you may have, for filing in the Museum research library, or with information as to the location of any such accounts with which you may be familiar.

INTRODUCTION

Rutland's first settlers in the eighteenth century were English-speaking people of British descent who moved here from Connecticut and Massachusetts seeking homes on newly-opened land made safe for settlement by the end of the French and Indian Wars.

Rutland's development as a microcosm of an ethnically diverse American society began 70 years later, when the railroad came to Vermont. Beginning in the late 1840s, large numbers of Irish from northeastern ports were employed to build the half dozen railroads that once served Rutland. Many remained after the railroads were completed, continuing to work for the railroads or for the then burgeoning marble industry.

French Canadians chafing under English Canadian domination, and seeking a better economic lot, were the first to bring a foreign tongue to the community when they started arriving in significant numbers by the 1850s to work in the marble quarries.

The need for cheap labor, a need immigrants have always filled, and a chance encounter in New York resulted in the first Swede coming to the marble quarries in the 1870s. Unlike the French Canadians, the substantial numbers of Swedes who followed sought to learn English and assimilate more rapidly.

A need for skilled craftsmen caused the then consolidating Vermont Marble Company to bring the first of many Italians in the 1880s. Poles, Finns, Hungarians, Ruthenians and Czechs left the shifting political boundaries of Central Europe to seek a more secure and prosperous life in America and Rutland, finding the means initially in the quarries.

The specific conditions which caused the emigrants to leave their homelands varied from country to country but were generally related to a combination of feelings of oppression and poor economic conditions, classic causes of emigration. Equally classic homogeneous causes of immigration, perceived greater political, social, religious and economic freedom and greater economic opportunity brought these heterogeneous peoples to America and Rutland.

Once here, the inevitable, for that time, followed. People of different faiths and different tongues erected separate churches, on one occasion because Irish strikers shunned French Canadian strikebreakers, an antagonism that continued for decades. On another occasion a proposed church for Italians was not built, in part due to the cultural differences among Italians, Irish and French Canadians. Separate schools were built because of religious and linguistic differences. Each immigrant group formed its own social, cultural and benevolent organizations which, while technically not part of the organized churches, were frequently associated with a group's church.

There were the unique, often poignant stories of each immigrant family, the change of names, the long hours of work, the often hazardous working conditions and the settled immigrants assisting new arrivals. There were the stories of saving to send for families and saving to start businesses of their own, from shoe repair shops to fruit and ice cream shops. There were the stories of getting sufficient education to enter the professions. The arrival was gradually followed by upward social mobility and assimilation.

The once extensive cultural diversity of Rutland is now largely a memory. Surnames are often the only reminder of national origin, as languages have been forgotten and customs homogenized. While the early arrivals married only those of the same national origin, as the separate Irish, French and Polish sections of the West Rutland Catholic cemetery eloquently testify, it is doubtful that national origin is a factor at all in contemporary marriages among the descendants of these immigrants. Many of the churches remain but decreasingly as the focus for people of a specific national origin. The reasons for their formation gone, the original separate schools are gone. The General Sarsfield Cornet Band, named for a seventeenth century Irish patriot, and the other social and cultural organizations have atrophied and largely disappeared in the face of assimilation and changing social activities. Twentieth century unionization and social legislation have created new organizations which have assumed the functions of the benevolent societies which assisted in times of need.

The railroads came, consolidated, prospered and declined. The marble quarries opened, consolidated, prospered and declined. Another early employer of immigrants, the Howe Scale Company, followed a similar economic path and is now completely gone. These early employers of the immigrants have been assimilated into a larger economy now dominated by the local plants of large national corporations. The immigrants have likewise been assimilated and dispersed in an increasingly homogeneous, mobile society.

While the descendants of some of the original immigrants remain, increasingly the Rutland community is populated by people who have moved here more recently, the one now generally indistinguishable from the other. Rutland's once diverse ethnic character is now largely just another chapter in its history. Immigration to America and to Rutland have been followed by assimilation in America and in Rutland.

Robert Edward West

MARBLE VALLEY'S UN*

Workers from many nations quarry Vermont's rock-ribbed hills

By Elizabeth F. Hale

Many Americans were surprised recently to discover that the most rock-ribbed Yankee state wasn't so exclusively Yankee after all. Rock-ribbed, yes . . . as any of the men who mine the deep veins of marble at Proctor or Danby, Vermont, will tell you.

But when the United Nations awarded to the Vermont Marble Company a contract for the walls of its new marble headquarters on the banks of New York's East River, these same men proudly pointed out that up there in Proctor they had a United Nations of their own, a typical American melting pot. Yankee, Irish, French-Canadian, Italian, Swede, Finn, Pole, Hungarian, Czech — all mingle freely in this Green Mountain town founded by a Vermont Yankee. But it wasn't always so.

When Colonel Redfield Proctor, beginning his self-appointed task of building the Nation's largest marble company started welding together the various scattered little marble companies, he found the villages around Rutland populated with a liberal sprinkling of the sons of Erin.

First of the foreign-born groups to come into "Marble Valley" in large numbers, first to work in the quarries and mills, and the first workers of the Sutherland Falls Marble Company and the Rutland Marble Company (later consolidated by Colonel Proctor into the Vermont Marble Company), the Irish had won for themselves several claims to distinction. By the time they began working for Colonel Proctor in Sutherland Falls (now Proctor), they were experienced marble workers who had learned their trade in Dorset, West Rutland and Brandon. They settled in the west part of the town whose streets today bear their names. Irish ever came directly to Sutherland Falls from Ireland. The year 1870 found them already residents who had served an apprenticeship to their adopted state by building the railroads that connected Vermont with the outside world of Boston, Montreal, Albany and New York City, and who then had drifted into the machine industries which had sprung up along Otter Creek, or the numerous marble quarries and mills in West Rutland. It is about these workers in "Little Ireland," as West Rutland became known, that the most colorful stories are told about the days long before those quarries and mills were part of the Vermont Marble Company. Yet the *Rutland County Herald* noted carefully that "although there are so many men — a large proportion foreigners — there is not a place in Vermont more marked for quiet, thrift and strict temperance, than West Rutland."

**This article first appeared in the Spring, 1951, issue of American Heritage and is reprinted with permission. Elizabeth F. Hale is an associate professor emeritus of history and government of Castleton State College, where she taught from 1940 to 1977. She lives in Castleton.*



The "Garden of Eden" was a section of Proctor which was occupied by Swedish immigrants. A number of one-family houses were built in a pasture which came to be called "Paradiset" by the Swedes, meaning "Garden of Eden" in English.

Other commentators were not as kind, resentfully naming them "West Rutland Cattle." Anxious to make the most of the opportunities now open to them as American citizens (having become naturalized as soon as possible), they eagerly accepted the railroad's offer of a free one-way ride to Rutland to vote in such numbers that the railroad was obliged to use freight cars to accommodate the crowd. Comments were rife that the "Cattle" had influenced the election adversely!

Equally important with civic participation was the desire for education which the leading marble men encouraged. As early as 1851 a deed was given by the firm of Sheldons, Slason and Morgan to Rev. Z. Druon of Rutland, representing the Roman Catholic Diocese of Vermont, to a plot of land "for the erection of a Roman Catholic Church and schoolroom to be used for that purpose and no other," or as Charles Sheldons expressed it, "a plot clean through to China for a school with not a bit of marble in it." Eventually the school came to be incorporated directly into the public school system, although until 1910 the parish priest was always a member of the local school board.

The church mentioned in the deed of 1855 was a temporary wooden structure later replaced in 1861 by a beautiful marble edifice erected out of scrap marble given by Sheldons and Slason.

Many of the West Rutland lads participated in the War of the Rebellion. On their return, a goodly number thought the marble bosses should pay higher wages and those employed at Sheldons and Slason went on strike in 1868. The firm met the situation by importing a small army of French-Canadians in freight cars upon whom now fell the name of "Cattle." Spirited battles ensued between Irish and French-Canadians. Finally the bosses won out. Some of the Irish drifted back to the mills or quarries. Many left the marble business — some to become farmers while quite a large number went to found a new settlement in Ontario, Canada. "Little Ireland" then had its numbers greatly depleted.

The French-Canadians numbered about 500 at their height, but the consolidation of the marble companies reduced their number by half. They never played the role the Irish did, although a French-Catholic Parish was established as a branch of the Sacred Heart of Mary in Rutland.

The Irish and French-Canadians were soon joined by other Europeans. In the early 1870s Sheldons and Slason hired a few Swedes who later left West Rutland for Minerville, New York during another strike. In 1880 they returned to Vermont to work for Redfield Proctor's marble company at Sutherland Falls. These were not the first Swedes, however, to come to Proctor, for in 1876 the Colonel persuaded Lars Larson, a husky Swedish youth who had just landed in New York to accompany him home. Larson, in turn, brought other Swedes to Proctor. For more than fifteen years the Swedish migration continued. Some came through the aid of relatives. Others were hired at the wharves in Boston and New York by company agents on the lookout for lads with brawn to work the quarries. At times carloads of Swedes would arrive in Proctor. The heaviest period of migration was 1886-1896. From then on there was a gradual tapering off.

While many Swedes settled in Proctor, goodly numbers settled in West Rutland and Center Rutland where Lutheran church groups were organized. The area just beyond the Lutheran Church in Center Rutland is known as "Little Sweden." Most of these people worked for the smaller marble companies which were also gradually bought up by the big, new Vermont Marble Company. Today most of the Swedish young people seek new opportunities elsewhere.

As the Swedish population grew, two churches were established: the Swedish Congregational and the Swedish Lutheran. Over the years the Swedish Congregational Church communicants have gradually united with the Union Church so today only the Swedish Lutheran Church holds services. For a number of years prior to the First World War both churches had summer sessions or schools for the Swedish children in the village where they were taught catechism, Bible history and the rudiments of the Swedish language.

The Swedes also formed a Swedish Aid Society for benevolent purposes, in reality the benevolent organization for the two churches; a Swedish branch of the Foresters; an organization of the Vasa Order with a ladies' auxiliary, and a local branch of the Scandinavian Fraternity of America. Many belong to the Odd Fellows.

For many years the Swedish people were very clannish. About the time of the First World War some intermarriage took place, and during the Second World War quite a bit of intermarriage occurred. A number of Swedes married Italians.

The most lasting and probably the most picturesque contribution of the Swedish population lies in the Swedish names given to various parts of town. "Hus-raa" (Meadow Street), meaning houses standing in a straight line; "Kattejat," a semi-circle of houses around the corner from Meadow Street; and "Paradiset," more familiarly known in English as the "Garden of Eden," a small settlement of new houses, are among the best known.

While Redfield Proctor was attracting the brawny Swedes into the marble industry, he was also looking for skilled workmen who would enable his company to produce a superior product. About 1880 Colonel Proctor went to Carrara, Italy and engaged eighteen men who were skilled stone cutters to come to Proctor. They arrived about a year later. Then the familiar story repeated itself. The newcomers wrote home about the opportunities at hand, and another group set forth, arriving in 1885 after stopping off in Boston or New York. Gradually others joined the Company. All the Italians who came to Proctor were skilled craftsmen, stone cutters or marble carvers. After a time some moved away to other places. Although they trained their own apprentices, there are not enough cutters at present. So in recent years other men with that ability have been trained by the Company. The Italians have in later years intermarried with both the Swedes and the Hungarians.

In his quest for skilled workmen Colonel Proctor succeeded in attracting twenty-five English families from Ely, Vermont when a strike occurred at the Ely

mines in 1885. These Englishmen originally came from Cornwall and had been hired by the Ely mine agents as they disembarked at Boston.

It was during the period of the eighties that the first Poles arrived in West Rutland from Pennsylvania, where word had reached them about Vermont's opportunities during a slack period in the quarries there. Soon similar messages were on their way to Poland. Gradually others came.

The largest group arrived in 1900 to be followed by another sizeable one in 1904. Almost all of the Polish immigrants who settled in West and Center Rutland came from the neighborhood of Galacia near Cracow. While the majority worked for Vermont Marble, most of the others were employed by the other marble companies. Today the largest number of foreign-born employees of the Vermont Marble Company is Poles. Most of the younger generation also work for the Company, although quite a number have become prosperous farmers.

More than any other group, the Poles have clung to their customs and their language. Assimilation came very slowly, especially for the women of the first generation. Some Polish national holidays were celebrated in the church right up until 1919. As early as 1905 the Poles erected a church in West Rutland under the leadership of Father Valentine Mihulka. Since 1908 the children in Polish families have, for the most part, attended the parish school, since 1924 under the direction of the Felician Sisters who came from Poland. Today all subjects in the school are taught in English. The pupils may still learn their catechism in Polish, though since World War II it is taught in English.

Just about the turn of the century, several other groups of European nationals heard of the opportunities in Proctor and journeyed thither. For some it was only a temporary residence until work more to their liking became available elsewhere, while for others it became a permanent home. It is in this category that the Finnish people belong. Seeking refuge from the intensive program of Russification which was being forced on the Czar's subject peoples in the nineties, a steadily trickling stream of Finns came to Proctor up to the time of World War I. Skilled laborers, they found employment in the rubbing sheds or the carpenter shops until they chose to migrate to Massachusetts or the middle west.

Today there are not more than thirty individuals of Finnish extraction living in Proctor. Yet their contributions to community life make it impossible to pass them by. All kinds of sports were introduced immediately upon their arrival. The old-time natives were treated to the spectacle of men and women skiing over the Proctor hills. The Finns also pioneered in swimming at Beaver Pond which thereupon became known as the Finlander Place. The Finnish Steam Bath Society erected a building for baths. This Society also cooperated closely with a Finnish sick benefit society which existed until 1923. When World War I broke out, there was a sizeable group of young Finns who were interested in track events, their customary recreation in Europe.

Other European nationals who came during this same period, from 1904 to 1914, were from Bavaria, Ruthenia, Hungary proper and present-day Czechoslovakia. Most of the Bavarians have long since moved away. The largest Ruthenian migration occurred about 1906 when a considerable number came direct from Europe to Proctor. Most of them still work for the Marble Company, save a few who have become farmers in Rutland Town. Originally of the Greek Orthodox faith, the majority now belong to the Independent Christian Church which erected a meeting house for religious services in 1937.

The newcomers from Hungary proper, members of the intensely nationalistic Magyar people, were the most numerous among these latter groups. Skilled laborers, they soon found employment in the machine shops or other types of skilled work. As early as 1904 the Magyars organized a benefit society called Petofimagyar Egylet, a lodge for men only whose requirement for membership was that at least one member of a family must be a native-born Magyar. This lodge is still in existence. But the Hungarians laid great stress on naturalization; all have become citizens. Like the other Europeans, they observed certain national holidays until 1917. Within recent years more intermarriage has taken place, especially with the Italians.

Those employees at Vermont Marble Company whose native homes today are a part of Czechoslovakia came to Proctor in small numbers over a period of years so their homes are scattered about, chiefly in Proctor, Center Rutland and Rutland. They, too, have laid great emphasis upon citizenship.

All the time the different European nationals were coming to Proctor, and adjacent towns, the Vermont Marble Company was expanding its organization to include many of the other independent marble companies. So most of those Europeans who originally came to work for the other marble men eventually joined forces with their countrymen under the leadership of this company. Willingly and graciously, they or their descendants will describe to an interested listener their past experiences, but they are most careful to emphasize that, no matter what has been their background, today they are *Americans*.

"Any time you are looking for the United Nations," says Almo Tenerani, Superintendent of the Exterior Building shop at Proctor, "come down. That's what we are, and we can find most any nationality you want to see."

THE IRISH IN RUTLAND*

In 1761, when the Town of Rutland was chartered, it consisted of what is now the City as well as the Town of Rutland, West Rutland and the village of Sutherland Falls (now Proctor). The first settlers of this town were former residents of Connecticut and Massachusetts. Their religion was Protestant, mainly Congregationalist. A little village grew up in both the east and west sides of the town. The first church was built in the west side of the town in 1774, but several years later — 1787 — another congregationalist church was built on what is now Main Street, and the parishes were divided. Hence, the terms, "Rutland, East Parish" (or East Rutland) and "Rutland, West Parish" (or West Rutland).

It would be difficult to ascertain who were the first Catholic settlers of Rutland. There were non-Catholic families bearing the distinctly Celtic and Catholic names of Kelley, Gleason, Butler, Barrett, and so on, whose ancestors came here in the 1790s and 1800s and who might have been Catholics.

Among those who brought the faith here, and whose descendants still retain it, were the Lystons, McMahons, Cliffords, Fitzgeralds, Kelleys, Brohans, Burns, and so on — the first two families named coming here in the 1820s and the others coming later.

But what caused this Irish immigration? Without going into details, it is safe to say that economic and financial conditions in Ireland at this time caused it. During the years 1815 to 1830 the population of the country grew to such an extent (8 or 9 million people) that agricultural Ireland could not support its people. The English landlords divided and subdivided their rented lands so that the Irish tenants could not make a living off their small plots. In some areas the potato (the main staple of the diet) failed so that the people were on the verge of starvation. Anxious for their lands to make money, the English landlords let their lands out for sheep grazing, thus reducing the land on which the potato could be grown. As a result of these and other conditions, poverty existed in Ireland.

At first, in the late 1700s, the immigrants were from Protestant Ulster. They were small farmers, and not paupers. They brought some money with them and hoped to better their lot. But as the years went by, and as the fares were cheap, many others left Ireland for America to better themselves. Some of these people came to this area, where they settled on farms in Shrewsbury, Tinmouth, Wallingford, Rutland and so on. Others found work in the iron works in Pittsford. This minor immigration continued into the 1840s.

*This article is an excerpt from the Reverend Patrick T. Hannon's typescript, "The History of St. Peter's Parish, Rutland, Vermont: The Rock" (1970).

After the failure of the potato crop in Ireland in 1846, tens of thousands of Irish men and women immigrated to Canada and to this country, landing in Quebec, Boston and New York, among other ports. The potato blight also affected other crops — wheat, oats, turnips, beans, and so on. The results were appalling. Disease and starvation caused deaths everywhere.

The exodus from Ireland brought countless thousands to the eastern seaboard. All classes — farmers, tradesmen, and shopkeepers — were included. Although most of them stayed in Boston or New York, for example, in Irish neighborhoods, a number of them ventured west and north.

In 1848 the railroads were being built in Vermont. The laborers on these were mostly Irish hired in gangs by the builders. Since Rutland was a railroad center, many of these men settled here, working for the railroads at various jobs, or in the machine shops, or the marble industry, which began to boom in the 1850s. French Canadians, who had settled in northern Vermont earlier, now began to come into this area, although in lesser numbers.

What brought about this increase in the Catholic population? First, Rutland was a railroad center, and, secondly, many industries had located here. For example, in 1877-1878 the Howe Scale Co. moved here from Brandon and brought many new people to the village.

In connection with the building of the new plant, the Rutland Herald of September 5, 1877, related this fact. "The site (of the new building) has been occupied by a number of Irish Shanties, the inhabitants paying \$15.00 a year for half or quarter acre patch. Some of these Irish settlers have occupied the soil for over 20 years. A few of them by saving and hard labor on the railroads, have laid up sufficient to buy themselves land elsewhere. Others more shiftless are loath to move. But they must give way, and are out gathering the Murphies and preparing to move. Next week the scale works begin their building."

Soon after the arrival of the first Catholic families, some of the children of school age began to attend the common school in their district. At that time there was no state law of compulsory attendance at school. But many Irish families wished that their children obtain an education.

However, it developed that one of their strongest objections was to a few religious practices found in the school. When the Catholics arrived here, the religion of the parents of the children in school was Protestant. Although there were several denominations among them, it was agreed that no particular denomination's tenets were to be taught in the school.

But by mutual agreement the school day began with a prayer and a reading from a Protestant version of the Bible; and sometimes the singing of a hymn.

Catholics were strictly forbidden to read from a Protestant Bible. The Douay version was the only Bible acceptable to Catholics. Hence, we can see the beginnings of a conflict. The "immovable object and the irresistible force." This, and the use of Protestant prayers, caused difficulties between the Protestants and Catholics. In some places it was obligatory for the Catholic children to own a Protestant Bible if they wished to attend school. Not to possess a Protestant Bible was excuse enough for expulsion from school.

The readers (or reading books) often contained excerpts from the Protestant Bible, as, for example, the Ten Commandments, which the children were obligated to memorize and recite in class. This, too, was a cause of difficulties.

Recourse to the school committee was listened to politely but the situation did not change.

So, for these reasons and perhaps others, as soon as Catholics were numerous enough to build a local church, they almost always built a parochial school soon afterwards in order to educate their children according to their own beliefs, as well as to give them a sound secular education.

The common, or public, schools of those days were not the same as the public schools of a later period when most of these conditions changed.

In 1855 the Rev. Z. Druon built the first Catholic church in Rutland on Meadow Street, near the corner of West Street.

On November 10, 1855, Father Druon purchased a house and lot on West Street (now #273) from Frederick Chaffee for \$500.00 to be used as a schoolhouse.

We do not know for certain that it opened for classes for the winter term in 1855 (The winter term usually began about the first of December). But it is probable that it did, with about 50 pupils and a lay teacher.

But we do know from a reference in the report of the superintendent of schools for East Parish, Rutland, for the year 1856, that it was in session in 1856. Filing his report on March 12, 1857, he wrote: "There are 12 school districts in East Parish, Rutland, containing 1066 children of legal school age. — Only 650 pupils have attended the schools during the winter. — If we add to the number stated, the number of scholars *in the Romish school*, there still remains the number of 300 children who have not attended any school during the winter.

THE FRENCH CANADIANS*

In 1496 King Henry VII of England sent John Cabot, an Italian, to discover a passage to the Indies. But, instead, he discovered Canada, very probably landing on the shores of Newfoundland. The English did nothing further with this discovery.

However, French fishermen came in 1504, found a great fishing ground on the Grand Bank, and began a fur trading business with the friendly Indians.

In 1533, and again in 1535, Jacques Cartier sailed from France up the St. Lawrence River as far as Montreal. Trading posts were established at Port Royal, Quebec, Montreal, and Trois Rivieres which eventually grew into towns or cities.

But in 1590 Henry of Navarre began to colonize the area around the St. Lawrence River. The method that he chose was to grant a monopoly in the fur trade to individuals or to small trading companies. The individuals and small trading companies were to settle a certain number of colonists per year at their own expense. The immediate response was not impressive. But by degrees the number of colonists grew.

In 1620 English Pilgrims began to colonize Massachusetts. As the years went by, they began to spread northwards into New Hampshire. Each felt that the other was encroaching on the other's territorial rights. So troubles ensued. The French and Indian Wars followed, and finally, the English sent an army under General Wolfe which conquered Quebec and, later, Montreal and points to the West.

Canada thus became an English territory by 1763.

The French settlers in the Province of Quebec, New France, resented the English laws and government. At this time there were the French Canadians who numbered more than 60,000. They were mostly Catholics. There were not more than 2,000 British. These latter brought with them a new religion, the Church of England, and the French Catholics were disenfranchised.

This governing of the French Canadians by the English has been a cause of conflict between the two nationalities ever since. Of course, there were the moderate French Canadians who did not like the situation but made the best of it. But there were also the radicals who tried to form their own government. Even to this day we find the radicals asserting themselves and resorting to acts of violence to try to bring about a French Canadian republic.

Following the Revolutionary War, 1775-1781, we find a few of the more adventurous French Canadians migrating south of the border into Vermont. One of the first was a certain Captain Mallet, who in 1785 kept a tavern on the shores of Lake Champlain in the Town of Colchester. He gave his name to the Bay. In the early 1800s French Canadian settlements were to be found at Swanton, St. Albans Bay, Fairfield, Burlington and Vergennes, and other northern towns along the Lake.

*This article is an excerpt from the Reverend Patrick T. Hannon's *Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish: A History* (1977).

In October, 1837, what was known as "Papineau's Rebellion" caused other French Canadians to leave the Province of Quebec for Vermont. For years they had been taught that this province in which they lived had once been their ancestors', but that it had been taken from them by the English. By 1837 they were ripe for rebellion against their English overlords and attempted to establish a French republic, especially in the southern half of the Province.

The most prominent of their leaders was Louis I. Papineau, a member of Parliament. A convention was held in St. Charles in October, 1837. Similar meetings were held in other cities and towns, including one in Montreal.

In St. Charles a battle took place between the government troops and the radicals. The rebels were defeated and fled, some of them to Northern Vermont. The sympathies of many Vermonters lay with the rebels.

Gradually, others came into Central Vermont, drawn either by cheap farmland or by jobs, which in the 1840s and 1850s were beginning to become more numerous in the town. Rutland had become a railroad center in the late 40s and early 50s. The marble industry began to flourish, and other industries opened shops in Rutland. According to the 1840 and 1850 U.S. Censuses, most of the French Canadians were laborers, some few were blacksmiths, R. Lawrence, a shoemaker and Louis Caissey, a storekeeper.

The U.S. Census (government census) for 1850 showed that there were about 50 French Canadians in the Town of Rutland. At that time the Town of Rutland was made up of the present City of Rutland, the Towns of Rutland, West Rutland, and Sutherland (now Proctor).

In the 1860s the number of French Canadians continued to grow. For the week of November 17-23, 1868, we find this article in the Rutland Herald: "Owing to the increased number of Catholics in Rutland, the congregation has been divided. The Irish are building a new church for themselves on Mechanics Street (now Convent Avenue), and last Tuesday the Rev. George N. Caissy was in town and secured a beautiful spot between Center and East Rutland where a new Catholic Church will be commenced next spring for the use of the French Canadians." Father Caissy was then stationed in Brandon.

Just prior to this, perhaps earlier that fall, Father Caissy had taken a census of the Canadian population in Rutland and found about 50 families. The need for a separate congregation was felt. The Canadians wished a church of their own.

* * *

The Rectory having been acquired, Father Gagnier felt he needed more land south of his lot to build his church. He bought another lot, 70 feet on Lincoln Avenue and 150 feet deep, for this purpose. The new church was soon begun and began to be used on April 23, 1870. From then on mass was offered at 10:30 a.m. every Sunday.

* * *

Father Caissy had found about 50 families in the fall of 1868 living in East Rutland. But at the time that the Sacred Heart of Mary Parish was established, Hemingway, in her **Gazeteer of Vermont** Vol. III, page 1050, states that there were between 60 and 100 Canadian families living in East Rutland.

The number of families continued to be about 100 in 1871, with 40 single persons. In 1874 there was a slight drop to 88 families. In 1876 Father Gelot reported that there were about "70 families coming to church".

In 1877-1878 the Howe Scale Company moved from Brandon to Rutland. A great number of French Canadians who worked at the Howe Scale Company in Brandon moved to Rutland in these years.

In the Parish Report for 1877, Father Gelot reported 133 families and ten single persons. But the next year, to quote Father Gelot, "There are more than 200 families as I count all the French; but French Canadians attending to their duties are 150". In 1879 he reported 200 families, and 20 unmarried men and eight single girls. But in 1884 he reported "233, really French, and 51 mixed, with either a Yankee or Irish spouse".

However, in 1898 a new element was added. Father Proulx, who spoke Italian, reported "Italians for baptisms and marriages only". Four Italian families belonged to the parish. In 1899 there were 269 French-speaking families and two Italian families. In 1901 he reported 240 French-speaking families, five Italian families and one Polish family. In 1902 there were 232 French-speaking families and 12 Italian families in the parish. In 1906, the parish members were 265 French-speaking families, 17 Italian families and one Hungarian family.

In 1911 the total population of the parish was reported as 1,248. But in 1917 Father Proulx reported that "most all of the parishioners can speak English". Between 1921 and 1923 there were reported about 1,300 English-speaking; in 1924 the number jumped to 1,500; and until 1951 the number varied between 1,200 and 1,500 English-speaking parishioners. In the early 1940s it is remembered that Father Vezina stated that less than five per cent of his parishioners at that time could understand French.

* * *

The Academy Of Our Lady Of Vermont

The position of the French Canadian children vis-a-vis the district schools of Rutland was a difficult one. English was the language of the district school. French was the language of the home. While it is true that some French Canadians did send their children to the district schools, the children at first had a hard time. They could not understand the teacher or their English-speaking classmates; and the teacher could not understand their French-speaking pupils. The children very likely lost at least one year in school while learning enough English to keep up with their classmates.

Therefore, it is not surprising to learn that when Father Gagnier began the parish of the Sacred Heart of Mary (Sacre Coeur de Marie) that he almost immediately began to look for an Order of Nuns in Canada who would establish a French-speaking school for the children of the parish.

We find, in fact, that even before the church was completed in April of 1870 that an Order of Nuns, the Most Holy Names of Jesus and Mary of Hochelega, Montreal, had opened such a school in the parish.

They rented a house on Main Street which was used as a convent-school. It opened its doors on January 31, 1870.

The school that these Sisters opened was a girl's school. It is doubtful that this school was supported by the parish. The parish report of 1872 mentions \$50.00 for the support of the school, while that of 1874 states \$100.00 for the school. It is likely that those who sent their daughters to it paid a small tuition or some produce or food stuff in lieu of money.

* * *

St. John The Baptist Society

The first recorded attempt to organize the French Canadians living in Rutland into a society was made in 1879-1880 at the Sacred Heart of Mary Church. Father Jerome Gelot had a hand in organizing the St. John The Baptist Society, a unit of an international Society (or Union) dedicated to charity and sociability among its members.

The December 31, 1879, issue of the *Rutland Herald* reported that, "The St. Jean Baptiste Society held its first annual dance at the Armory last evening. A large company was present and the festivities were prolonged to a late hour."

However, the first meeting of the new society took place on February 4, 1880. Dances, suppers and other money-raising activities were frequently held, not only for the benefit of the society but also for that of the church.

June 24 was their feast day. Not only did they celebrate this day locally, but some years they went to St. Albans, to Vergennes (1882), to West Rutland (1890) to join with the local units in their celebrations.

But without question their biggest celebration was June 24-27, 1886, when they hosted the National Convention of the St. John The Baptist Societies. Twenty-six Societies were represented at this convention. The city donned holiday attire for her guests. The convention was held at the Town Hall. Three hundred delegates attended.

The last day of the convention was climaxed by a giant parade through the streets to the Fairgrounds, with all the delegates and bands that were present participating. Ten thousand people lined the parade route. Mass was Celebrated at the Fairgrounds. Bishop DeGoesbriand preached in French and Father Daniel O'Sullivan in English.

Delegates came from Paris, France; Montreal, Canada; New Hampshire; Vermont; Massachusetts; Rhode Island; Maine; New York and from as far away as Lake Linden, Michigan. New Hampshire was well-represented, and the site of the next national convention was chosed as Nashua, New Hampshire, in June, 1888.

The first officers of the local unit to be mentioned in the Heralds was for the year 1883. They were: Alphonse Allaire, President; David Hevy, Vice-president; A. Rousseau, Secretary; Joseph Poulin, Financial secretary; P. Roi, Corresponding secretary; Joseph Lareau, Treasurer; Rev. Jerome M. Gelot, Chaplain; and Hilaire Lefevere, Marshal. The election of officers was held on the first Wednesday of January each year.

Their first meeting place was the hall at the rear of the old church on Lincoln Avenue. It was known as The St. John The Baptist Hall. Later, the Society met in the Canado-American Hall over the Rutland Savings Bank on 45½ Merchants Row.

For a number of years, this society had affairs such as dances, dinners and entertainments for the benefit of Sacred Heart Church. In the early days, and during the building of the new church, they put on suppers and so on to assist the pastors with their financial burdens.

The officers in 1899-1900 were: Noah LaRose, President; and Frederick Gosselin, Treasurer. The Local Council was No. 20. Their meetings were held on the first and third Wednesdays of each month at the Canado-American Hall.

A few years later the officers were: C. J. Frechette, President, Nazaire Ostiguy, Secretary and A. J. Courcelle, Treasurer.

The Garde d'Honneur, a juvenile branch of the society, is first mentioned in the City Directory in 1909-1910. They met on the first and third Fridays of each month. The first officers were: L. N. Provost, Captain; C. J. Frechette, First Lieutenant, and L. S. Robillard, Second Lieutenant. This unit of the Society lasted for several years.

The first mention of the Ladies Auxilary of the Society, Cercle St. Cecile, was in 1914. This unit still meets regularly.

The parent unit of the Society lasted until 1960, when, due to lack of interest among the younger men of the parish, the St. John The Baptist Society was down to seven or eight members. This great Society then decided to disband.

The last officers were: D. J. Laflamme, President; A. Racine, Secretary and L. N. Provost, Treasurer. They still carry on the insurance with the Society by paying directly to the national office.



This ceremonial sword belonging to a member of the Garde d'Honneur was inscribed, "Conseil No. 20, Rutland Vt."

WEST RUTLAND*

The original settlers of this town were mostly of English descent. They came here from Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Hampshire. The Irish arrived, building the railroads, and settled here to work in the quarries and shops of the infant marble companies. Because of a strike in the marble yards in 1868, French Canadians were brought in by the Rutland Marble Company to replace the evicted Irish families. Some Germans came in at this same time, but they did not stay too long. In 1871, the Rutland Marble Company imported nearly 100 Swedes to work for them,¹ but about 25 of them soon left for the West,² and in July, 1873, about 40 more of them moved to Crown Point, New York, and vicinity³ because the iron mines were paying better wages. In April, 1886, it was reported that a large number of Swedes moved to Michigan. In October and November a large number of Italians were employed here, but in April, 1886, they moved elsewhere.⁴ In May, 1888,⁵ another large group of Italians were brought here by the marble companies. In August, 1889, several Jewish families settled in town.⁶ In the fall of 1889, there was an influx of about 100 Swedes.⁷ In February, 1890, it was reported that 12 Polanders had recently arrived to work in the quarries.⁸

¹*Rutland Herald*, May 6, 1871.

²*Ibid.*, Mar. 11, 1871.

³*Ibid.*, July 9, 1873.

⁴*Ibid.*, Oct. 22 and Nov. 12, 1885; April 8, 1886.

⁵*Ibid.*, May 15, 1888.

⁶*Rutland Herald*, Aug. 14, 1889.

⁷*Ibid.*, Dec. 2, 1889.

⁸*Ibid.*, Feb. 19, 1890.

* * *

The Irish

In the 1830s some adventurous Irishmen came to West Rutland.¹ These men had quite possibly come to America some years before and after awhile wandered into this area. It is unlikely that they came here directly from Ireland. There is a record of some Irish being here before 1838. These men married local women, for we find the names of the women on the rolls of the Congregational Church. The first two Irish names mentioned were Conway and Farlay in 1838. By 1843 we find mention of Thomas McLaughlin, Harvey Berry, John Burke, James J. Griffin, Robert Kelley, and Peter Daley. In the old cemetery on Pleasant Street are buried the children of John and Sabina Hanley, O'Briens and Gormans before 1850.²

One of the first Irishmen to own property in West Rutland was John Hanley. On January 26, 1843, John and Sabina Hanley bought 21 acres from Frederick and Laura Burgess in West Rutland for \$500.³ It is told of him that he wrote back to Ireland boasting that "his farm was so large that neither man nor beast could walk over it in a day". His farm included at least part of what is known as Hanley Mountain. (John died on March 16, 1886 at the age of 81, more than 40 years after his arrival here.⁴)

* * *

It was not until the 1850s that a great number of Catholics settled here. Partly because of the potato famine in Ireland in 1846-1848, and partly because jobs were plentiful in America, great numbers of Irishmen (in 1852 there were 220,000 immigrants) left their native land and came to America.⁵ With the railroads being

*This article is an excerpt from the Reverend Patrick T. Hannon's typescript, "The Biography of St. Bridget's Parish, West Rutland, Vermont" (1967).

built in Vermont, many hundreds of them were hired to work on these construction jobs. In 1852 six lines entered Rutland, two of them — the Rutland and Washington Railroad and the Rensselaer and Saratoga — going through West Rutland (There was but one set of tracks going through West Rutland and owned by the Rutland and Whitehall Company and used by the Rutland & Washington from Castleton to Rutland.) The Rutland and Washington Railroad went through Poultney, Rupert, Salem, New York to Troy; while the Rensselaer and Saratoga ran through Whitehall and Saratoga, New York, to Troy.⁹

As the railroads were being built, the men lived in shanties built along the roadbed. It is entirely possible that Father Daley offered Mass in these shanties as the road went through town. When the railroads were completed, many of these Catholic men settled here and sent to Boston (the port of entry for most of them) or to Ireland for their families. Father Daley offered Mass in at least two of their homes — that of William Colligan and that of William Tully.

With the completion of the railroads, these men found employment in the marble quarries and shops which were beginning to flourish.

¹Golden Jubilee Booklet of St. Bridget's Church, 1910.

²Annals of Congregational Church, 1904.

³Land Records.

⁴*Rutland Herald*, Mar. 17, 1886.

* * *

⁵Edmund Curtis, **History of Ireland**, p. 370.

⁶**Historical Rutland**, 1761-1961, p. 21.

* * *

Living Conditions

How were the Irish received when they first settled in West Rutland? Father O'Callaghan wrote, "When they first arrived they are subject to that prejudice and obloquy which invariably attends a stranger in a foreign land. But the good sense of the Americans soon discovers them to be sober, industrious and hard-working people."³

While working on the railroads for many months, these men had lived in crowded, rough shanties. Living under these conditions, some of them fought a good deal, drank a good deal, and sometimes made nuisances of themselves. When these men settled down in town to work in the marble-yards, a number of them continued to make nuisances of themselves by drinking and fighting. In the opinion of the townspeople, all the newcomers were lumped together in this same category.²

In the *Rutland Herald* of this era, there are accounts of drunken Irishmen fighting among themselves and with other townspeople.

The temperance societies flourished at this time. Their frequent meetings were reported at length in the *Herald*. References to "demon rum" and "damnable drink" were frequent. The foreigners were guilty of selling and buying it and were arrested, jailed or fined.

At the March town meeting here in 1864, several Sons of the Emerald Isle had with them bottles of whiskey. Their attention was more on the contents of the bottle than on the proceedings in the hall. Several times they interrupted the meeting with their laughing and talking. But, in spite of this, a respectable list of candidates was elected for town office.

However, at the conclusion of one of the Temperance reports, the writer concluded: "It is rare to see a man drunk on our streets. Much praise is due to the law enforcement officers . . . and also to the Catholic priest for his vigilance, zeal, and effective aid."

Another reason for this prejudice was the religion of these newcomers. The natives were nearly all Protestants. The coming of the Catholics brought out all the bias and anti-Catholic prejudice that had lain dormant. During these years the Know-Nothing Societies were at their peak. Their aim was to "resist the insidious

policy of the Church of Rome and all other foreign influences against our republican institutions in all lawful ways; and to place in all offices of honor, trust, or profit in the gift of the people or by appointment none but Native-American Protestant citizens".³

A third cause of prejudice was due to the great numbers of Irish who settled here. "They'll vote us out of town." It was feared that when these people became citizens and had the power of the vote, they would gang up and vote in men for office who would not have the best interests of the town at heart.

But in due time, although some continued to "imbibe the spirits", the unruly elements tamed down, the prejudice was overcome by the sober and industrious behaviour of the Irish. The influence of the good priests helped to effect this change.

About 1850 there must have been a tremendous building program in West Rutland. As has already been noted, in 1840 there were only "20 dwelling-places", and in 1857 there were 1,294 members in St. Bridget's Parish. The marble companies had to house their workers. Tenement houses, some with ten family units, were built. These houses were thrown together in a hurry and, consequently, not too well built. This is the inference contained in the letter of a striking quarryman, previously quoted, "if house can be called the kind of buildings they have for a poor man".

These houses were all painted red, and hence the section of town on the east side of the swamp was known as "Red City". About 150 families lived in this area.

These houses were not furnished free to the workers and their families, but they had to pay rent. The occupants paid \$30.00 to \$36.00 per quarter of a year for rent. This was automatically deducted from their monthly pay envelopes before the men received them. If they were ill and out of work, or work was slack, the rent was deducted from their earnings first. If they were out on strike or ceased to work for the company, they were forced to vacate the premises, so that new workers and their families could move in. Since there were no other houses to rent, they were forced to move elsewhere.

The companies had stores at which the families did most of their shopping, although they were not forced to. There were independent storekeepers. The families traded mostly with the company stores because they gave credit, and this was taken out of their monthly pay envelope. In times when work was slack, as in the winter, they ran up bills. When the worker went back to work, it was not unheard of that the pay envelope was empty. His rent, grocery bills, wood and coal bills were more than he had earned. In those days the words of the popular song of the 1960s — "16 Ton" — "I owe my soul to the Company Store" would not have been considered amusing. It was a harsh reality. The families who bought on credit were charged one third more than those who paid cash. It was for these reasons that children quit school as soon as they were able to work in order to help support their families.

In order to supplement their earnings and to provide for their families, these early West Rutlanders had a large garden which was planted with potatoes, cabbages and other vegetables. Many of them kept a cow, a few pigs and chickens. The milk, eggs and meat from the pigs which they slaughtered, together with the potatoes and vegetables they raised, formed the staples of their diet. At the Company Store they would buy a barrel of flour, sugar, coffee and tea, and molasses to augment their diet. Of course, many owned a churn to make their own butter.

Their clothes were mostly hand-made, although some were bought ready-made. They were handed down from the eldest to the younger brothers and sisters or passed on to a needy relative or neighbor. Shoes were bought.

During the various strikes, we can only conjecture about the hardships suffered by the families of strikers. With no money coming in, and very little saved, many had to do without even items of necessity. The town, or private charity, had to support some to these families. Father Picart and Father Lynch assisted many of them. With the strikes occurring in the spring of the year, most of what they had stored up in the cellar was already used up.

The wonder of all this is that the children of these immigrants and their grandchildren made such strides not only in education but also in social and commercial advantages. Each generation of parents wanted their children to have a better education and more advantages than they had. They worked and saved towards this end.

¹Hemingway, *Gazeteer of Vermont*.

²D. C. Fisher, *Vermont Traditions*.

³*The Church in U.S. History*, p. 100.

* * *

Working Conditions

In the early days the United States was primarily an agrarian country. In 1790, for example, nine-tenths of the population were farmers, and half of the national wealth was in farm lands. But, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the United States was fast becoming an industrial nation, and after the Civil War it became highly industrialized.

To fill the jobs made available by this industrialization, there were the great numbers of immigrants who came to this country in the last half of the nineteenth century. Employers could hire great numbers of men at their own price, usually a low one. If the employee did not like it, he could be easily replaced. Always at hand was the threat of breaking up any strike by importing new men who were used to a lower standard of living in Europe. This was true in most of the big industries of this country — steel, coal, copper and other mines.

This was also true of the marble industry. The conditions under which men worked at the quarries and marble yards were extremely hard. They had been used to hard work while laboring on the railroads, but their present places of employment were equally as hard, if not harder. From the first, they worked from 6:00 a.m. to 6 p.m. (St. Bridget's bell, tolling the Angelus, told the thousand and more operatives when to start and stop work.)¹ Their wages were very small — 90 cents a day in the summer and 50 cents a day in the winter months.²

In the quarries big gangs of men worked to chisel free great blocks of marble. The earliest quarrying in the early 1800s was evidently a small operation. One or two men laboriously pried slabs free along natural cleavage lines in the stone from the outcropping above or just below the surface of the ground.³ A little later, gunpowder was used to blast out the blocks of marble, but this proved very expensive and wasteful.⁴

In the 1850s men were hired to gouge or cut grooves or channels by hand. This system consisted of cutting off the layers of marble at right angles with the line of their stratification. Blocks were obtained by cutting these channels or grooves by hand with tools known to quarrymen as a "ball drill". This drill was a round bar of iron, about six feet long, gradually swelling in the middle to one and one half inches in diameter. On each end of this bar, there was a cutting or chisel point of the best cast steel.

By the constant pounding of this instrument into the groove, a cut along the layer of marble three feet long and four feet deep can be made by a quarryman in about six days. Thirty men working side by side can liberate a layer of marble six feet wide, four feet thick and about 80 feet long in six days. About 12 days' work would be necessary in drilling holes in and under the layer, after which it would be ready to be raised from the bed and to be broken into blocks to be hoisted by crane or derrick to the surface.

A painting in the possession of Mr. and Mrs. H. S. Humphreys of 39 Blanchard Avenue, West Rutland, shows these men ranged in rows working with their tools. An emery-wheel was in use sharpening the dulled tools. It was with such back-

breaking work that marble was quarried in the 1850s and 1860s. It was not until 1863 that the steam-channeling machine was invented to do this type of work. Of course, it was some years later before this machine was in general use.⁵

In the shops and yards it took brute strength to move the great blocks of marble into the gangs for sawing. The marble was drawn to the area where it was needed by oxen on flat marble boats.

The conditions of work were hard and the pay was small. The men received smaller pay than they had been promised. The men felt that they were not being used right by their employers. The men asked for higher wages. The employers were unwilling to grant the raise.

On April 1, 1859, about 400 quarrymen working for four companies went out on strike for \$1.00 a day in the summer months and 75 cents a day in the winter. It was not until June 1, 1859, that they went back to work at their price.

Two letters published in 1859 in the *Rutland Courier* give some of the background of the strike.

"When we were injuring our health in those quarries, we had 90c a day in the summer, and received 50c a day in the winter. How can an employer expect to find people to work for such small wages? How could a man . . . support himself, his wife, and children, out of 50c a day during the cold winter, when he had to pay \$30 to \$36 for a house (if house can be called the kind of building they have for a poor man); when he has to pay \$4 a cord for wood; to pay 50c for a bushel of potatoes and to pay for everything else . . ."⁶

Conditions were so bad that the men did not wish to see another Irishman come here. On April 25, 1859, the men sent a letter to the *Boston Pilot*, describing their plight. It was also published in the *Rutland Courier* on May 6, 1859.

"In regards to the strike in the quarries in West Rutland, the men have been ill-used — seldom get any money, but had to take store-pay. At the stores they are charged 1/3 more than anyone else. They were promised 90c a day in the summer and 65c a day in the winter, but received only 50c a day in the winter . . . the bosses cast stones at them when they would raise their heads to take a moment's rest. The men now demand \$1.00 a day in the summer and 75c a day in the winter."

"The companies are complaining bitterly of the priest, saying he excited the men to rebellion, although that is a well-known falsehood, as the men turned out without letting him know their intentions, and while he was away at one of the missions. But since the strike he has exhorted them to be united and not to go against each other. He is helping them as much as he can. . . . The writer knows that he is sacrificing a good deal of comforts and . . . necessities in order to assist poor families who are thrown out of work.

"About 400 men, working for four companies, have been turned out (evicted) of their homes without any place to pass the night with their families. All honor to Mr. (William) Barnes who is carrying on another quarry, giving his men employment at a \$1.00 per day, and his houses to shelter the poor families who were turned out. Now the men are going away . . ."

(signed) "Hibernicus"
May 6, 1859.

The priest referred to in this letter was the Reverend Francis Picard. It is told of him that he went to one of the owners to intercede for the strikers. In the heat of the conversation, the owner called Father Picard a "fool".

"There will be fools among the _____," retorted the priest. And, the story goes, this family in later years ran into bad luck, losing their fortune, among other things.

Wages stayed at a dollar a day in the summer and 75 cents a day in the winter until the winter of 1863, when the men were paid \$1.25 a day. During these years the labor scene was quiet. But early in April, 1864, the men sought not only an increase in wages but also shorter hours. The companies offered them \$1.50 for 11 hours of work. If this was not satisfactory, they were told to vacate their houses.

The quarrymen asked for \$1.50 for ten hours' work. If their demands were not met by April 11, they would not go back to work for less than \$1.75 a day.

Mr. John Cain, editor of the *Rutland Courier*, editorialized (April 15, 1864): "Quarrying is a trade requiring much experience and it is of the most laborious kind, we cannot see why these men should labor more than ten hours a day, any more than the employees of the railroad."⁸

A strike followed these demands in all the companies, except Sheldon and Slason Co.⁹ The striking men and their families were ordered to vacate the company-owned houses before April 15, 1864. The reaction of the men was to stay where they were. No one moved. And so about May 1, 1864, the Rutland Marble Company went to court to evict these families from their houses. There were 69 defendants, and the first to be tried was John Teelon. When the verdict went against him, the other defendants gave up and did not defend themselves. "It is the intention of the company to clear the tenements of their present occupants and to employ new hands and resume work as soon as possible."¹⁰

Another strike took place among the workers on several quarries at West Rutland in the spring of 1868. Again, as in 1859 and 1864, the families of the strikers were turned out of the company-owned houses, but this time about 60 French Canadians and some Germans from New York were imported by the Rutland Marble Company "to take the places of the workmen on strike for higher wages" — \$1.75 a day.

But, by the time the Canadians arrived here — May 21, 1868 — a great number of the original strikers had moved elsewhere.

On May 21 a train left Montreal for West Rutland. It carried about 60 men who were to take the place of the strikers. News of its coming spread through the town, and a group of the strikers planned to meet the train and, in a way they knew best, to discourage the Canadians from debarking. The officials of the company heard this, and they had the train stopped some distance out of town to let its passengers walk to their houses. But, in spite of this maneuver, trouble ensued.¹¹

"Rumors were rife in this village (East Rutland) last evening of a riot which was reported to be in progress in West Rutland between a party of Irish who have been on strike at the marble quarries for some weeks past and a number of Canadians who recently arrived to take their place. Officers and citizens of this village went over in considerable numbers in the early evening to act as guardians of the peace."¹²

"Excitement still exists," reported the *Herald* of May 25. But the next day it reported: "Quiet still reigns supreme . . . There are not enough of the original strikers left to raise much of a disturbance."

Between these two groups of Catholics there is further evidence of "bad blood" on June 11. "A melee ensued between a group of Frenchmen and a party of Irish, both groups having indulged in too frequent potations (sic) of intoxicating liquors." It resulted in black eyes, cut heads and bloody countenances. It lasted until the officers of the law arrived, when one arrest was made.¹³

In 1867 the parish census showed 350 Irish families, whereas the 1868 census reported 200 Irish families and 75 French Canadians.¹⁴ These figures give some idea of the number who were turned out in this strike. Stories handed down from those days tell of families walking, with the family cow, to East Dorset and other places in search of homes and the means to support their families.

Father Lynch wrote to his bishop in his 1868 report on the parish: "This past year has been a trying one for this congregation. Did things go on in their usual way, we would have been entirely free of debt. So many people were left destitute of even the means of removing from this place that the pastor was obliged to assist them in doing so. Times are assuming a brighter aspect."¹⁵

Up to, and including, the 1880s the quarrymen were laid off on December 1 of each year. They were not rehired until the worst of the winter was over, usually about April 1.¹⁶ There were some exceptions to this rule. Great numbers of men were thrown out of work. The winter of 1875-1876 seems to have been the worst. The *Herald*, on January 26, 1876, reported: "Business is at a stand-still. Wages are very low. One firm stopped work for over two months."¹⁶

The mills and shops did work all winter but usually at reduced wages. One year it was reported that "a reduction of wages of 12% was made in all the quarries and mills." With the quarrymen idle, it was easy for the companies to offer small wages throughout the winter, to the mill-hands.¹⁷

Wages throughout these years did not go much over \$1.00 a day. In 1885 marble sawyers got \$1.05 a day and laborers \$1.00 a day. In 1881, at the end of June, the Vermont Marble Company paid 700 laborers a total of \$25,000, which amounted to \$35.70 per man. In this same month the Howe Scale Company paid 400 employees \$17,000, averaging \$42.50 per employee. The men were paid but once a month.¹⁸

The quarrymen and mill hands were not content with the 80 cents to 90 cents in the winter months and the \$1.00 to \$1.10 the rest of the year. Twice in the 1880s they tried to have the companies raise their wages to 12½ cents per hour.¹⁹

Late in the month of February, 1880, the companies in West Rutland had promised their working men \$1.10 for an 11-hour day. But, before work on March 1, the companies informed the men that they would give them \$1.00 for a 10-hour day. All the quarrymen of the Rutland Marble Company and two-thirds of those of the Sheldon and Sons company — about 200 men — went on strike demanding 12½ cents per hour. The companies refused and told the men either to go back to work by Wednesday or to vacate the company houses. A tense, one-sentence in Thursday's *Herald* told the outcome of the strike. "The West Rutland quarrymen have all gone to work, and the strike is over."¹⁰

In March of 1886, a local unit of the Knights of Labor was started here. This labor organization was a forerunner of the American Federation of Labor. It was a national organization of working men and was the first attempt to unionize the laboring man. One hundred men from this vicinity joined it at the start,²¹ and it grew in numbers. It was a social club as well, sponsoring dances, entertainments and a local baseball team.

In February, 1887, the local unit of the Knights of Labor called upon the Vermont Marble Co., Sheldon and Sons, Gilson and Woodfin, Valido Marble Company, Dorset Marble Company and the Lyman Strong (formerly the Esparanza) Marble Company, all of West Rutland, to demand an increase in pay ranging from 10 cents to 35 cents a day, beginning on March 1. Wages for quarrymen and mill hands were still \$1.00 to \$1.10 a day — much of the time for eight hours' work. Skilled workers (marble cutters, carvers and so on) received so much a piece (piece work) and could, by dint of hard work, earn higher wages.

At the True Blue Marble Company and the Lyman Strong, the quarrymen were getting \$1.20 a day at this time. (Actually, they were paid \$1.30 a day, but 10 cents of that had to go for car fare.)²²

A spokesman for the companies told the laborers' representatives that it was expensive for the companies to keep their plants running in the winter months, that very little marble was in demand during these months, and that they had a sufficiently ample stock of marble on hand to withstand the pressure of a strike. And, besides, they could get other men to go to work in the quarries.²³

This increase in wages was to have been a general one in all the marble companies of the area.²⁴ But it failed to be asked for elsewhere.

Again, there was no strike. "The men," the *Herald* reported, "seem to be satisfied with the explanation of the companies."²⁵

It may be wondered at that, with this agitation for more pay, why the men did not go elsewhere to work. Of course, some did move away. "Several families left the quarries for North Adams, Massachusetts, in March of 1880."²⁶ In April "several more left for New Jersey where they found work at much better wages than are paid here."²⁷ Thereafter, individuals or groups of men left for other parts of the country. Some Italian laborers left to work elsewhere.²⁸ A large number of

Swedes moved to Michigan.²⁹ In 1887, more men "left for Marietta, Georgia, for higher pay".³⁰

But most of the men stayed on to work here. By this time many owned their own homes and had roots here. They had hopes that the pay would be better sometime. The quarrying operation was now being done by stone channelling machines.³¹ Other improvements were being made. The Vermont Marble Company had taken out an insurance on their men.³²

It is true that some years the marble business was slow. In 1875 business was at a standstill.³³ For a few years thereafter, it continued to be slow. "It is well known that on account of hard times and very keen competition, none of the marble interests in Vermont have been, for two of three years at least, in a flourishing condition. This is especially true at West Rutland."³⁴

But by 1882 business was booming,³⁵ continued to flourish.³⁶ New quarries and mills were opened in Whipple Hollow. One company had secured a large government contract for soldiers' monuments³⁷ and was paying carvers at least \$6.00 a day for lettering the stones.³⁸ So it could not be said that the companies were having such a hard time that they could not afford to pay the quarrymen and mill hands more money.

A practice about which we hear little today was in vogue in these years. Some of the companies here and elsewhere had agents in foreign countries to contract with men of special skills to come to this country to work for a specific company. One company, through its agent, signed up 12 marble cutters to come to the United States from Italy to work for \$2.50 a day and also signed contracts with eight marble polishers for \$1.75 a day.³⁹ When this practice started in the local companies, there is no evidence given in the *Heralds*.

As was mentioned in an earlier chapter, quarrying was dangerous work. Men were constantly getting hurt because of accidents. But the worst year for accidents was 1893. In February a mass of stone fell from the ceiling of one of the Vermont Marble Company's quarries, killing five men and injuring 10 more.⁴⁰ Again in July, in a Vermont Marble Company quarry, one Polish man was killed, and two others were injured.⁴¹ The men were scared. Several Swedish men resigned from quarry work.⁴² The February accident was the worst in Vermont Marble Company history up to this time.

On January 1, 1892, the Vermont Marble Company leased the Sheldon Marble Company for 30 years. The Sheldon Marble Company, started in 1844, was the second largest company in West Rutland. In 1888, the Vermont Marble Company had purchased the Gilson and Woodfin Company and in 1889 the Ripley and Sons. The Vermont Marble Company was now the largest marble company.⁴³

¹ *Rutland Herald*, Nov. 11, 1865.

² *Rutland Courier*, April 29, 1859.

³ *Ibid.*, Aug. 31, 1865.

⁴ D. C. Gale, **Proctor, The Story of a Marble Town**, p. 97.

⁵ *Rutland Herald*, Jan. 22, 1868, p. 2.; Professor Albert Hager, **Marble of Vermont**.

⁶ *Rutland Courier*, April 29, 1859.

⁷ *Rutland Courier*, May 6, 1859.

⁸ *Rutland Courier*, April 15, 1864, p. 2.

⁹ *Rutland Herald*, April 7, 1864.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, May 5 and 12, 1864.

¹¹ *Rutland Herald*, April 16 and May 20, 1868.

¹² *Ibid.*, May 22, 1868.

¹³ *Ibid.*, June 12, 1868.

¹⁴ *St. Bridget's Annual Report*, at Chancery Office.

¹⁵ *St. Bridget's Annual Report*, 1868, at Chancery Office.

¹⁶ *Rutland Herald*, Dec. 15, 1875; Dec. 12, 1878; Dec. 6, 1883.

¹⁷ *Rutland Herald*, Oct. 16 and Dec. 15, 1875; Dec. 15, 1883; Oct. 28, 1884; Dec. 10, 1885; Nov. 22, 1888.

¹⁸ *Rutland Herald*, May 17 and July 23, 1883.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Mar. 2, 1880.

²⁰ *Rutland Herald*, Mar. 3 and 4, 1880.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Mar. 11, 1886.

²² *Ibid.*, Feb. 25, 26 and Mar. 3, 1887.

²³ *Rutland Herald*, Feb. 25, 1887.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Feb. 26, 1887.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Mar. 3, 1887.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Mar. 26, 1880.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Apr. 20, 1880.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Apr. 8, 1886.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Apr. 8 and June 10, 1886.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Oct. 8, 1887.

³¹ *Rutland Herald*, Apr. 3 and May 17, 1888.

³²*Ibid.*, Apr. 4, 1887.

³³*Ibid.*, Jan. 26, 1876.

³⁴*Ibid.*, Jan. 31, 1880.

³⁵*Ibid.*, Aug. 4, 1882.

³⁶*Ibid.*, Jan. 30, 1884.

³⁷*Ibid.*, Apr. 11, 1884.

³⁸*Ibid.*, May 15, 1884.

³⁹*Rutland Herald*, Sept. 22, 1888 and June 15, 1891.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, Feb. 13, 1893.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, July 26, 1893.

⁴²*Ibid.*, Feb. 16, 1893.

⁴³*Ibid.*, Nov. 4, 1891.

* * *

Education

Irish and French Canadian Catholics began to settle in town in the early 1850s. And, no doubt, objections were raised by the parents to their children reciting "the Protestant" version of the Lord's Prayer and listening to reading from the Protestant version of the Bible.

At any rate, when Father Drouin built the first Catholic church here in 1855, he attached to the building a room to be used for a Catholic school.⁵ This school was supported by the Catholics. The first schoolmaster was James Lyston, who was paid \$310.42 for the school year. In 1857 this school was attended by 126 scholars.⁶

When St. Bridget's was made a parish in January, 1857, a problem arose over buying a rectory for the pastor to live in. Since the receipts for the year from pew rents and collections were so low (\$874.00), and the expenses, including the school expense, were \$629.42, it seemed difficult to see how a rectory could be purchased and at the same time maintain the school. Considerable thought was given to closing the school. But there was reluctance to do so.

A unique solution was found to solve their dilemma. So unique was the solution that it was doubtful if another instance similar to it can be found in the history of any parish in the State of Vermont.

Father Picart, the first pastor of St. Bridget's, "spoke to many notables of the town, particularly to the Congregational minister, the Reverend Aldace Walker, about the possibility of the town building and maintaining a school for the Catholic children. They will vote that there will be Catholic teachers, and that the children will make use of Catholic school books, but the teacher should be examined, and the school visited, by the school committee appointed by the town. If these conditions are agreed to, the town is willing to support the school."⁷

The townspeople, on the motion of the Reverend Aldace Walker, voted to build a new district school for the Catholic children and to maintain it. Old St. Bridget's School continued to be used until the new school was built. But the expenses were shared by town taxes, as well as the tax levied by the school committee on the families whose children attended the school. The new school — District School No. 7 for Catholic Children — was built and opened in 1865. It was located on Church Street, west of St. Bridget's Church, on the brow of the hill overlooking the Vermont Marble Company's shops and quarries.⁸

* * *

District School No. 7 (on the hill) was used for Catholic children until 1896 (Mrs. James Bell graduated from it the last year that it was strictly a Catholic school). There had been a movement in town to divide the village school districts #21 and #7, the dividing line to be the D&H R.R. tracks. It began in 1888, when an item for town meeting read: "To see if the town will vote to approve the division of the town school district No. 21 and No. 7 by the D&H R.R. tracks".³⁵ It was voted down, but brought up again in 1892, when it was again defeated. But in 1896 District School No. 7 ceased to be a public school for just Catholic students. It then became a school for all the children on the east side of the swamp.

⁵*Land Records*, Recorded May 29, 1855.

⁶ *Annual Parish Report* — 1857.

⁷ *St. Bridget's Annual Report* — 1858.

⁸ Beer's Map, 1869.

* * *

³⁵ *Annual Town Reports for West Rutland*.

* * *

Parish Societies

In the more than 100 years of its existence, St. Bridget's Parish has had a variety of societies. Each was instituted for a need at its particular time. About some of these, very little is now known. If there were any parish societies before 1860, there is no record of them today.

St. Patrick's Benevolent Society

The first recorded society in the parish was the "St. Patrick's Literary and Benevolent Association". This was started sometime in the 1860s. Certainly it was in existence in the latter half of this decade.

St. Patrick's Benevolent Society had as its purpose, "the relief of sick members, the burying of its deceased, and also the relief of widows and orphans of deceased members as far as the Society may think proper".¹

It had the usual officers and met on the second Sunday of every month at one o'clock in one of the school rooms.

To become a member, a man must be of good moral character, attend to his Easter Confession and Communion, and to the principal Christian duties on Sunday, must be free from infirmity or disease, and must be over 16 and under 45 years of age. Members were elected singly, not more than one member being balloted for at a time. They were considered members only when their names were written in the Society's books and had paid their initiation fee.

Among the penalties imposed by the society upon its members were the following: "Any member who shall make use of profane, vulgar, or indecent language during a meeting shall, for the first offense, be fined one dollar; for the second, five dollars; and for the third, expelled . . . any member who shall be guilty of immoral practices, such as habitual drunkenness, fighting, or abusing his family, or in any other way giving marked scandal, shall upon conviction be suspended or expelled as the members may determine, . . . any member who shall neglect his general religious duties, such as hearing Mass, going to Confession, etc., will ipso facto cease to be a member."

Attendance at the funeral of a deceased member was mandatory. The members met at the residence of the deceased, marched to church to attend the Mass and thence marched to the cemetery. If a member did not attend the funeral, except for sickness or absence from town, he shall be fined one dollar.

Once their monies reached \$1,000 each sick member of one year's standing was entitled to receive \$3.00 for every week of his sickness and medical attention during his sickness. When any member of the Society died, his relatives or friends received \$20.00 to help defray the expense of the funeral. The expenses for the religious services were defrayed from the funds of the Society. This assistance was given to the family of the deceased even though the Society funds were under \$1,000.¹

At the April meeting of 1871, the Society had more than \$1,000 in its treasury.² In 1872 its officers were: James Burke, President; John Kelly, Vice President; Michael Duffy, Treasurer; Patrick Carrigan, Secretary; Frank Carrigan, Assistant Treasurer, and Robert Monaghan, Marshall. The *Herald* reported "the society is in a prosperous condition, and will continue the same influence, charitable and otherwise, which has characterized it in the past." Its members increased with the years because of its benefits.³ In 1873 there were at least 90 members in this society.

On the occasion of the death of a member, the Committee on Resolutions had published in the *Boston Pilot* and the *Rutland Herald* a notice to the effect that a faithful member had gone to his reward.

In the late 1860s and the 1870s this society assumed the duty of organizing the celebrations in honor of the patron saint of the Irish. This they did as a matter of honor, and they did it well.

For the most part the articles in the *Herald* were silent on the many benefactions, so these are known only to God. One item — April 26, 1878 — mentioned that "St. Patrick's Benevolent Society is one of the largest in the state and pays a physician \$350.00 yearly to attend to their sick and "wounded members".

From its surplus monies the Society voted to send \$50.00 to the yellow fever victims in Memphis, Tennessee (yellow fever raged there in the summer of 1879).⁴ When another famine hit Ireland in the late 1870s, the society voted to send \$120 to the sufferers in Ireland.⁵

Its officers in 1885 were: Thomas McCormick, President; David Cline, Vice President; John Judge, Secretary; Edward Burns, Assistant Secretary; Bernard Lynch, Marshall; James Hincks, Treasurer; Investigating Committee: Owen McCormack, Peter McQuade and John McLaughlin.⁶

After flourishing for many years and being the source of much good in the parish, this society was in financial difficulty due to sickness and death in the organization. The President, William Everin, called a meeting to decide its fate. After much discussion it was decided to continue the special work of fraternal charity and benevolence of the society.⁷

After this date the society was not too active, although it took part in the Memorial Day exercises on May 30, 1890, and it was reported to have had an oyster supper at the Barnes House for its members on St. Patrick's Day of 1891.⁸ In 1893 it again took part in the exercises for Memorial Day.⁹

¹Rules of St. Patrick's R.C. Benevolent Society of West Rutland.

²*Rutland Herald*, Mar. 17 and 21, 1868.

³*Ibid.*, Sept. 29, 1870.

⁴*Rutland Herald*, Aug. 25, 1879.

⁵*Ibid.*, Feb. 14, 1880.

⁶*Ibid.*, Apr. 16, 1885.

⁷*Ibid.*, Nov. 16 and Dec. 12, 1888.

⁸*Ibid.*, Mar. 18, 1891.

⁹*Ibid.*, May 20, 1893.

General Sarsfield Band

In 1867 the General Sarsfield Cornet Band was organized. (General Sarsfield was an Irish Patriot who had command of the Irish Army in 1691 at Limerick.) Among the parishioners there were a number of musicians. It took part in St. Patrick's Day parades, furnished music at the Rutland County Fair and gave concerts in Rutland, Clarendon Springs hotel and Fair Haven. During the winter months it gave concerts at the school house, together with vocal solos, readings and dramas for social and cultural enjoyment. In the summer there were open-air concerts. It played and marched in parish and many area celebrations. After its appearance at the Rutland Fair, the *Herald* reported, "Its performance showed increased skill and proficiency, and demonstrated to the local citizenry that we have the best musical talent for any occasion".¹

In February, 1871, this band received a sizeable donation which was used to buy German Silver instruments. One of its members — Edward Copps, the first E Flat cornetist — was singled out as "one of the most promising musicians in the state."²

This band was composed of 16 pieces. Professor J. E. Leonard was its leader, and until 1871 it was conducted by A. B. Williams. In June, 1871, Professor F. Wilson became the conductor. Among its members were: Big Ned Copps, the cornet; Red Ned Copps, the bass horn; Jim Copps, the trombone; Mike Copps, the tenor horn; John Carmody, the bass drum; Frank Carter, the tenor horn; Dennis Thompson, the cornet; Patsy Copps, the snare drum; Mike Finley, the snare drum; Colonel O'Neil, the bass horn; and James Foster.³

Judging by the numerous mentions of this band in the *Rutland Herald*, not only the people of West Rutland but the whole area were proud of its accomplishments. It brought joy to all who heard it.⁴

In 1875 this band was organized under the direction of Edward Copps, leader and business manager. It was prepared to accept engagements and available for public demonstrations at reasonable terms. Among its other engagements it played at the Republican Meeting (August 21) and the Democratic Meeting (September 11) in 1876.⁵

Until 1881, the band was actively engaged in giving musical entertainment here and elsewhere. Among its many engagements it played at Lake Bomoseen; in June, 1878, it played at an excursion on Lake Champlain; in the summer of 1879, it played in Dorset, Vermont, and at the Westport, New York, Fair. It was characterized in the *Rutland Herald* (June 15, 1878) as "one of the finest bands in the State of Vermont".⁵

¹*Rutland Herald*, Mar. 17 and 21, 1868.

²*Ibid.*, Feb., 1871.

³*Rutland Herald*, Apr. 7, 1873.

⁴*Rutland Herald*, Sept. 5, 1873; Mar. 28, 1875; July 13, 1876.

⁵*Ibid.*, July 8, 1874 and May 20, 1876.

⁶*Ibid.*, Sept. 4, 1877; June 15, 1878; Aug. 7, 1879.

St. Patrick's Day Celebration

In 1868 the Irish societies of St. Bridget's Church, West Rutland, and of St. Peter's, Rutland, joined together to celebrate the anniversary of Ireland's Patron Saint. While the General Sarsfield Band and the St. Patrick's Literary and Benevolent Society attended 8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Bridget's, St. Peter's Irish societies attended a 9:00 a.m. at St. Peter's Church. With the General Sarsfield Band at their head, the West Rutland Irish marched to Center Rutland, where they were met by the Rutland group. The two groups then marched up West Street to Main Street, down Main to Washington, down Washington to Merchants Row and thence to St. Peter's School.

Each society wore a beautiful and appropriate regalia, and their manly deportment and martial bearing was highly complimented by all observers.

At 4:30 p.m. all attended Benediction at St. Peter's Church. A supper, vocal entertainment and a lecture by the Reverend Thomas Halpin closed out the festivities.

This was the first time that St. Patrick's Day was celebrated in Rutland and . . . everything terminated with much credit to all connected with the affair.¹

Each year thereafter, St. Patrick's Day was celebrated with fitting ceremonies. In 1870 a delegation of the Rutland Irish went to Burlington to take part in their celebration.² In 1871 Burlington and Hinesburg units took part in the Rutland celebration.³ In 1873 the West Rutland Irish societies were host to the Rutland and Fair Haven groups.

On this March 17, 1873, the members of the St. Patrick's Benevolent Society attended Mass at 9:00 a.m. After the Mass the Society went to the depot to meet the Hibernian Society of Rutland and the Rutland Brass Band. At 11:00 a.m. the Cambrian (Hibernian) Band of Fair Haven arrived in a sleigh drawn by four horses, playing the Irish National Anthem. Both bands (30 members) joined together under the direction of Professor Wilson. All came back to the school for refreshments. After refreshments the groups spent four hours of unalloyed pleasure enjoying the speeches, songs, jokes and visiting. Led by the bands, the groups then formed into a procession down Pleasant Street to Main, Main to Marble and then to the depot to see the Rutland group off on the train. In the evening the school children of Professor Leonard's school entertained a large crowd at Academy Hall.

And so it went, year after year, with very elaborate celebrations for the Patron Saint of the Irish.

¹*Rutland Herald*, Mar. 17 and 21, 1868.

²*Ibid.*, Mar. 17, 1870.

³*Ibid.*, Mar. 13, 1871.

St. Bridget's Choir

In the early 1870s St. Bridget's Choir was active, holding a festival in the winter and picnics at Lake Bomoseen in the late summer. Margaret C. Boyle, later Mrs. J. E. Leonard, was the organist.

St. Bridget's Total Abstinence Society

"In 1828 the Vermont Temperance Society was organized. Through the years it was opposed by many, including Bishop John Hopkins of the Episcopal Church. Temperance means moderation. Proponents of the temperance movement meant the enforcement by law of complete abstinence from all alcoholic beverages. In this context, the name is a gross misnomer.

"The first State of Vermont prohibition law was enacted in 1852. Wine was permitted for sacramental uses. County commissioners appointed town agents who could sell liquor for medical, chemical, and mechanical purposes. More than one town agent in Vermont became involved in some illegality relative to the sale of liquor.

"During the half-century of the Great Thirst many farmers and townspeople managed to convert hard cider into a heady potion. Liquor was smuggled into the state in ways not unfamiliar to some of those devised during the thirteen years of that mirage called Prohibition in the United States".¹

In West Rutland hard liquors, as well as wines and malt beverages, could be obtained by those who desired them. At least four or five of Father O'Reilly's parishioners made a business of buying and selling either smuggled or illegal beverages. Several men went to Hampton, New York, to buy a supply.^{1½} Father O'Reilly was an ardent temperance advocate. With the hope of lessening the influence of those so addicted on the young men of the town, Father O'Reilly started St. Bridget's Total Abstinence Society. On August 18, 1878,¹ this society was formed among the young men of the parish. They took the pledge to abstain from intoxicating liquors, for three years at a time, in order not to acquire an "evil" habit. Before the end of its first year, the society had 103 members and was growing.

This society met every week — on Monday evenings.

Within this society a debating club was organized. A visitor at one of the meetings was favorably impressed by several young men who conducted a spirited debate that evidenced much research and care in its preparation. A temperance play was under rehearsal to be given later by the members of the society.²

Beginning in 1879, this organization took part in the local St. Patrick's Day celebrations, marching in the parade, and in the evening put on a temperance play as part of the entertainment.³

On August 18, 1879, the first birthday was celebrated with a parade through the principal streets of town. The Sarsfield Band led the line of march.⁴

On Sunday, September 6, 1879, at the close of a parish mission, a beautiful banner of this society was blessed, and a large number of young men was added to its membership.⁵

At this same time (1879) the society sponsored a library and reading room.⁶ Books were added to it from time to time as funds permitted. Picnics and other entertainments were held to raise money.⁷ By 1884, it had a large and extensive circulating library, having upwards to \$500 worth of books, and was liberally patronized.⁸

Its officers in 1879 were: President, James C. Gillespie; Vice President, Matthew Quinlan; Recording Secretary, Thomas Burns; Financial Secretary, P. J. Dunigan; Treasurer, Daniel Noonan; Marshall, Thomas Carmody; Historian, James Hanley; and Directors, J. J. Murphy, P. W. Patton, and P. F. Mullin.⁹

At first this society held its meetings in School No. 7, but by 1881 the meeting rooms and library were housed in the old depot block (an old D&H R. R. station built on Marble Street across the tracks from the present station), and after the spring of 1883 in the old town hall.¹⁰

In August, 1881, on the occasion of its third birthday, the *Rutland Herald* reported that it "has been productive of great good to the Catholic populace of this place. It is earnestly hoped that it will continue to be a great moral agent in the community."¹¹

In 1883, its officers were: President, Daniel Noonan; Vice President, B. Lynch; Financial Secretary, T. Caffey; Recording Secretary, M. Rooney; Treasurer, John McTierney; Marshall, W. Patton; Librarian, Thomas Burns; and Assistant Librarian, P. Patton.¹²

In 1887¹³ the following men were elected to office: President, Patrick Gallagher; Vice President, Daniel Noonan; Financial Secretary, Michael McLaughlin; Recording Secretary, John Ryan; Treasurer, Daniel Noonan; Marshall, Patrick McLaughlin; Librarian, Michael Meehan; Directors, John Moroney, John McCormack, and Michael Meehan.

After 1887 no further mention is made of St. Bridget's Total Abstinence Society. As one of the senior citizens of West Rutland mentioned, "this society was short-lived." But the 10 years or so that it lived, it was very active and did much good.¹⁴

¹ *Vermont Sunday News*, Sunday, Sept. 19, 1965.

^{1½} *Rutland Herald*, May 22, 1888.

¹ *Rutland Herald*, Aug. 9, 1878; Aug. 15, 1879.

² *Ibid.*, Feb. 10, 1879.

³ *Ibid.*, Mar. 9, 1881.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Aug. 15 and Aug. 18, 1879.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Sept. 11, 1879.

⁶ *Rutland Herald*, Jan. 3, 1881 and Sept. 24, 1879.

⁷ *Ibid.*, July 11, 1883.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Feb. 21, 1884.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Aug. 26, 1879.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Oct. 13 and Dec. 22, 1882.

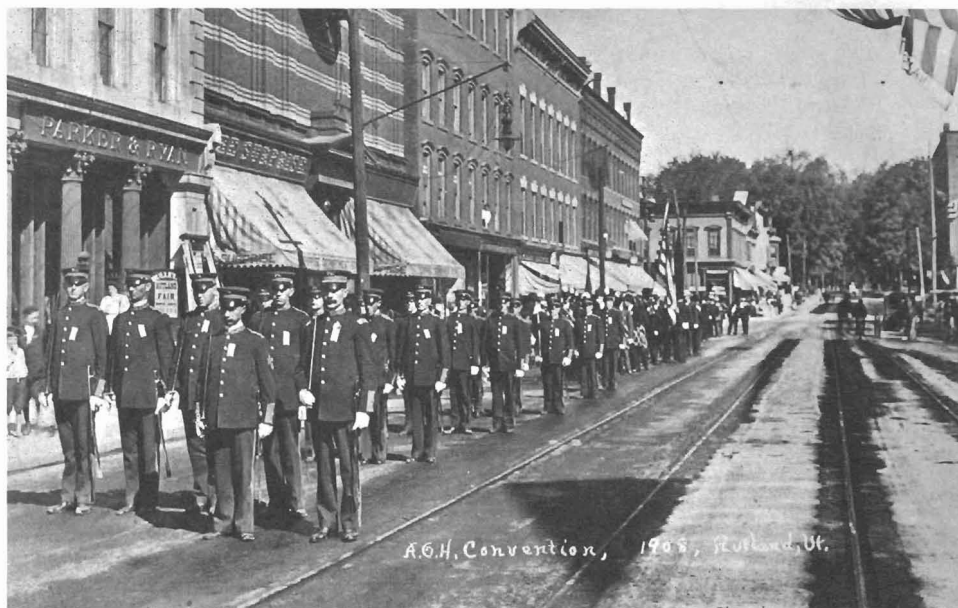
¹¹ *Ibid.*, Aug. 12, 1881 and May 7, 1885.

¹² *Rutland Herald*, Feb. 20, 1883; Feb. 19, 1885.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Feb. 26, 1887.

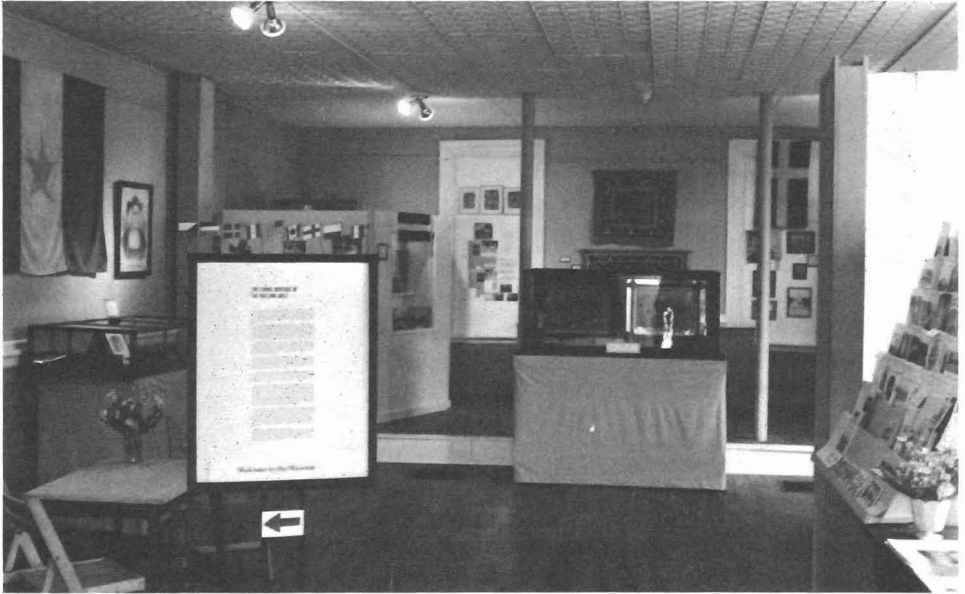
¹⁴ *Ibid.*, May 7, 1885.

Photo Credits: p. 29 Herbert W. Johnson, Sr.; p. 54 Thomas B. McDevitt; p. 55 Michael L. Austin, Rutland Historical Society.



The Ancient Order of Hibernians was a fraternal society organized to promote the interests and welfare of those of Irish heritage. In Rutland the roots of the AOH go back over a hundred years, and they participated in many parades such as this turn of the century celebration on Merchants Row.

Ethnic Heritage of the Rutland Area



This view of the current Rutland Museum exhibit, "Ethnic Heritage of the Rutland Area", shows the Italian, Hungarian and Swedish flags, as well as displays of photographs and objects relating to people of these and other nationalities who have settled in Rutland.



The Polish and Italian flags appear over displays relating to the customs and traditions of people from these countries living in the Rutland area. The exhibit remains open through Columbus Day weekend.

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
101 CENTER STREET, RUTLAND, VERMONT 05701
(802)775-2006; 775-0179

The Rutland Historical Society was founded in 1969 to preserve, study and disseminate the history of the original Town of Rutland as chartered by New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth in 1761, now comprised of the City of Rutland and the Towns of Proctor, Rutland and West Rutland. The Society maintains and operates The Rutland Museum in the historic Bank of Rutland building built in 1825, now owned by the City of Rutland, and The Rutland Farm and Rural Life Museum at the Vermont State Fair. A research library and the historical collections are maintained in the Museum. Gifts or bequests of articles of historical interest or money are welcome at all times and are deductible for income tax purposes.

The Society publishes the Rutland Historical Society Quarterly for the members and presents public historical programs throughout the year at the Rutland Free Library in the Nella Grimm Fox Room.

Membership in the Society is open to all upon payment of dues to the Membership Secretary, Hope E. Hubbard, 248 Lincoln Avenue, Rutland, Vermont 05701. Membership entitles each member to a subscription to four issues each year of the Quarterly, the right to vote at business meetings and the benefits of supporting the Museums, monthly programs, library and collections. Dues are \$3.00 a year for regular members; for those wishing to give the Society further support a contributing membership is \$10.00; a sponsor membership is \$25.00; a sustaining membership is \$100.00; and a life membership (one payment only) is \$75.00. Members wishing to pay two or more years' dues in advance are encouraged to do so to reduce costs. The expiration date of each membership is listed on the mailing label of the publication. Please send change of address on Postal Service Form 3576.

Manuscripts are invited; address correspondence to the Editor.

Editor: Michael L. Austin
Managing Editor: Jean C. Ross

Copyright © 1982, The Rutland Historical Society, Inc.

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
101 Center Street
Rutland, Vermont 05701

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED.

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION U. S. POSTAGE PAID Rutland, Vermont Permit No. 12
--



The number or letter on the address label indicates your dues status:

81 one year in arrears 82 current L life membership